



A Meeting of the Employment, Finance & Policies Committee was held on Monday 15th January 2024 at 7.30pm Winscombe Community Centre, Amesbury Room

Those present at the meeting:

Committee Members: Cllrs Archie Forbes, Kevin Joyce, Dylan Morris, Tom Nicholson, Lynne Stephens (Chair), Jack Taviner, Larry Van Haaren, Paul Watkins and John Witcher.

Parish Council staff: Lynne Rampton and Emma Buckland

Members of Public Present: None

Committee Members Absent: Cllrs Zak Aravantinos, Mark Boddy, and Simon Crew

- 1. Apologies for absence.** Apologies had been received from Cllrs Aravantinos, Boddy, Crew, and Pincher
- 2. Declarations of interest.** No interests were declared
- 3. Public Participation.** With no members of public present, there was none.

4. Minute Update from the previous meeting dated 16th October 2023.

Min 11. Staffing matters – A typo was noted in the year for the unused holiday entitlement. As the minutes had been approved at the November pc meeting, these were unable to be amended.

EFP meeting 17th July 2023, min 6 – although a double page article on finance for the new centre had been included, a member did not consider that the hard copy December 2023 pc newsletter explained why the WCA grant/loan had not yet been called upon, and how these funds were re-apportioned into parish council budgets for the next financial year. It was suggested that another article is included in the next hard copy edition.

5. To review 2023/2024 Budget Summary and Bank Reconciliation to 31st December 2023

The committee examined budget summaries for the period, along with bank statements and bank reconciliation to 31st December 2023. In accordance with adopted Financial Regulations, the Committee Chair had carried out the quarterly Parish Councillor test of hard copy bank statements, bank recs and a sample of invoices paid. The Deputy Clerk had carried out monthly bank reconciliation checks. The Committee Chair continued to check monthly salary calculations.

Current budget positions including under/overspends to date were considered along with an explanation for these. Areas of note included significant underspends for both the WMRG Committee and Environment and Award Land Working Group. Foul sewer works for the recreation ground had been deferred to the 2024/25 financial year to minimise disruption to sports club and club house activities, and Ash Die back works required on The Award Land had been less than anticipated. Provision had been made in the current, anticipated spend to 31st March to allow for relocation of the parish office to Sandford along with storage of some furniture/files.

Resolved: The budget summary reports and bank reconciliation to 31st December 2023 were accepted by the meeting.

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

6. To agree regular payments from bank account to be made by standing order & direct debit.

To reduce time spent preparing regular cheques or on-line direct payments, it was proposed that the following payments continue to be made directly from the Unity Trust current bank account.

List of Direct Debits			
Name ↑	Reference	Last Paid	Last Paid Amount
EDF ENERGY	671033238504	05 Jan 2024	-£223.00
GRENKE LEASING LIM	1130017694	05 Jan 2024	-£202.79
HUTCHISON 3G UK LI	984181921301151222	18 Dec 2023	-£6.00
ICO	Z6794030	02 Jun 2023	-£35.00
PUBLIC WORKS LOAN	WINSCOMBEA	01 Dec 2023	-£1,951.88
SSE	0069894	09 Jan 2024	66.74
SQUAREUP EUROPE LI		-----	£0.00

SUEZ R & R UK LTD	83000332	30 Dec 2023	-£132.92
WATER2BUSINESS	1168669901	01 Nov 2023	-£437.27
WATER2BUSINESS	2731881001	02 Jan 2024	-£40.81
WATER2BUSINESS	1168690101	01 Nov 2023	-£275.35
YU ENERGY RETAIL L	2000079698003	08 Jan 2024	-£334.96

List of Standing Orders

Beneficiary ↑	Account	Reference	Frequency	Next Date
CARLY DRAPER		MONTHLY SALARY	1-Months	20/01/2024
IFD CLIENT		APA/A10114237	1-Months	23/01/2024
KEENAN P & LE		MONTHLY SALARY	1-Months	20/01/2024
MR G E ALLEN		MONTHLY SALARY	1-Months	20/01/2024
MR T NYAMUNDA		CONTRACTING WORK	1-Months	23/01/2024
NICHOLAS JM		MONTHLY SALARY	1-Months	20/01/2024
PATRICIA KNAUER		MONTHLY SALARY	1-Months	20/01/2024
RAMPTON C&LJ		MONTHLY SALARY	1-Months	20/01/2024
EMMA BUCKLAND		MONTHLY SALARY	1-Months	20/01/2024
MR RUSSELL WHITE		MONTHLY SALARY	1-Months	20/01/2024

Resolved: That the payments as detailed be made by direct debit or standing order for the 2024/2025 financial year

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

7. Parish Council – to consider the implementation of a future forward financial plan to 2025

A simple 1-year forward financial plan had been agreed at the November committee meeting. This was now presented to the committee for approval and included future forward planning for a number of areas including replacement of ageing skatepark and play area equipment, provision towards the eventual replacement of the Sandford playing field fence as well as ongoing projects such as managing Ash Die Back Disease on the Award Land and financial commitment towards a new community centre.

Questions were asked, and answered about the potential loan to finance the new centre,

Resolved: That the Forward Financial Plan for the 2024/2025 financial year is recommended for approval by the Parish Council

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (8 in favour, 1 abstention)

8. Budget Planning for the 2024/2025 financial year & to agree a precept figure for recommendation to the full Parish Council for approval.

- a. Members considered rental charges and other income along with projected expenditure (Jan – Mar 2024) in advance of the 2024/2025 budget proposals.

With reserves depleted in previous financial years, the Chair reminded members of the need to exercise restraint in consideration of the budget and precept figures.

- b. **Sports Clubs contributions to grounds and changing rooms maintenance.** A £50 rise pa was recommended for each and represented an 6.25.% increase on current charges. Whilst members were mindful when applying any increased charges to the sports clubs for use of the facilities and grounds, current rents were still considered to be low. Checks would be made with other councils regarding hire costs for sports facilities before further increases were applied in 2025/26 to ensure charges to local clubs were still reasonable.

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

- c. **Cricket Clubhouse lease.** The first review of the 25-year ground lease was due in 2024 for payments for the next 5-year period, with the cricket club being advised in accordance with lease terms. The cricket club had been consulted and a 25% increase to the current annual payment of £1,750 suggested and proposed.

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

- d. **Grants.** A list of grant applications received had been included within the budgets and details supplied with meeting papers. The usual application from Winscombe Youth Club had been made along with grant applications for 2024/2025 from the Churchill and Langford Minibus Society and The Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford Children's Centre (towards running costs for the centre). These were considered along with usual contributions/donations for the Strawberry Line (maintenance works of the line in this parish) and the Citizens Advice Rural Outreach Service. Provision had been made for small grant applications over the course of the next financial year and these would be agreed on a case-by-case basis. The Parish Council had agreed a grant of £2,500 towards the Older Peoples Support Service (run by the Churchill and Langford Minibus Society, and based at the Sandford Retirement Village)
- e. **Parish Council Newsletters.** With the email on-line circulation list being around 300 email addresses in a parish of around 2,300 houses, it was not considered that a once a year publication was sufficient to reach the majority of parishioners. It was intended to switch the email marketing company, and grow this list through social media sources. In the meantime, four quarterly hard copy newsletters would continue to be produced and delivered to all homes in the parish
The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)
- f. **Staffing – general.** The Clerk and Deputy Clerk were engaged under a model NALC/SLCC contract. Orderlies had received a 5% pay-increase in April 2023.
- g. **Winscombe Community Centre.** The WCA had approached the parish council for support for funding of a new centre both through a loan (repayments to be met by the WCA each year) as well as a donation of £250,000. The pc would need to take a loan over a period of 30 years to finance such a grant and therefore a period of public consultation had taken place with the community throughout 2021/22 through an on-line survey, as well as delivery of regular pc newsletters to all households in the parish. Of the responses received to the survey, there was significant support for financially contributing towards the project. This was reaffirmed through an updated consultation in Nov/Dec 2023
- h. **Committee and Working Group budgets.** Where possible, committees had retained current budget figures. Exceptions to this were the WMRG Committee to allow for continued drainage works to the carpark and access road along with the Play Area budget where replacement of play equipment previously removed due to failure should be replaced.
- i. **War Memorial Recreation Ground Advisory Committee**
Considerable expenditure had taken place over the past 4-years to repair a collapsed drainage system on the parish council owned access road, and essential maintenance works for the road and carpark were considered. Following a drainage survey of the entire grounds, ongoing repair/maintenance works had been prioritized. Considerable debate took place on the inclusion of the lining of a foul sewer pipe across the car-park and access road with risk factors assessed should the pipe collapse and the impact on sporting clubs in time to repair this.
Resolved: Foul sewer repairs as proposed should be included in the 2024/25 budget
The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (7 in favour, 2 against)
- j. **General Reserves.** The Parish Council had previously been reminded of the need for general reserves to keep pace with recent precept and budget increases. With budget demands for 2024/25 seeing a significant underspend on current budgets, this was an opportunity to address general reserve levels which were previously considered low and in line with the adopted .reserve policy. Adopted by the council.
- k. **Ear-marked reserves.** A number of new headings have been allocated to reserve funds towards the replacement of aging play area and skate park equipment, along with parish owned street lighting
The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

The Employment, Finance & Policies Committee recommend to the full Parish Council that the projected forecast figures (2023/2024) and budget (2024/2025) as detailed are approved.

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

This would result in a Precept figure for the 2024/2025 financial year to be increased from £185,500 to £191,000 and would mean a Local Council Element of Headline Council Tax per D Band property increase from £84.02 to £85.42, equivalent to a 1.7% increase

Resolved: That recommendations as detailed are recommended to the parish council for approval

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

8. Matters for Information. None

With no further business, the meeting concluded at 8,45 pm.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....